

# AMERICA



# AFTER3PM

Afterschool Programs in Demand



Afterschool Alliance

# Acknowledgements

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# Methodology

The percentages and the projected numbers of children and families in *America After 3PM* are based on survey responses from parents. The Afterschool Alliance contracted with Shugoll Research to collect the data for *America After 3PM*. Nationally, 30,720 households were screened, and 13,709 households completed in-depth interviews via an online survey using a blend of national consumer panels. We reached the goal of at least 200 completed interviews in every state and the District of Columbia. In states where this goal could not be reached using online panels, random-digit dialing was used to complete supplementary telephone interviews. In order to participate, respondents had to live in the United States and be the guardians of a school-age child living in their household. The online interview took approximately 15 minutes to complete. All interviews were completed between Feb. 28 and April 17, 2014. Data are weighted on race and income within state, state population and, where appropriate, the rate of afterschool program participation. Projections for child-level data represent the 57.9 million youth in the United States based on numbers from the 2012 Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. The overall margin of error for children screened is +/- < 1 percent and the margin of error for household-level survey responses is +/- 1 percent.

This is the first wave of *America After 3PM* to be conducted using an online survey and random-digit telephone dialing. The 2004 and 2009 waves of *America After 3PM* collected data via U.S. mail surveys and random-digit telephone dialing. The decision was made to move from a mail survey to an online survey due to the increase in Internet use and availability over the years,<sup>1</sup> as well as a decrease in mail survey response rates. This change also allowed designing skip patterns based on how respondents answered a particular question, customizing the survey to the respondent. Steps were taken to maintain comparability to previous data where possible. Additionally, data quality assurances were built into the online survey, such as removing respondents who answer the same option for each question (“straight-lining”) and examining the speed in which respondents complete the survey (to eliminate “speeders”).

# Contents

Introduction	5
Key Findings	7
Real Progress, But More Work to Do: Afterschool Participation Reaches 10.2 Million	13
• Participation Spans Income Levels, Ethnicity and Gender	14
Too Many Children and Families are Missing Out	15
• 1 in 5 Children Unsupervised, but a Declining Trend Line	16
• Nearly Twice as Many Children in Line to Participate, if Programs Were Available	17
• Working Parents Rely on Afterschool Programs	18
Opportunity Gaps Persist	19
• Barriers to Participation	21
Afterschool Students Benefit from a Wide Range of Supports and Providers	23
• Afterschool Programs Provide Quality Care in a Variety of Areas	25
• The Positive Impacts of Afterschool Programs on Children	28
<i>Physical Activity, Health and Nutrition</i>	29
<i>Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Learning Opportunities</i>	30
<i>Older Youth</i>	32
Parents Want Public Funding to Support Afterschool Programs	34
Conclusion	36
Endnotes	38
About the Afterschool Alliance	40





# Introduction

In Baltimore, Md., students in the Digital Harbor afterschool program take advantage of hands-on activities, working with technology and developing skills like how to design a website, create mobile apps and make podcasts. On the opposite coast in Santa Ana, Calif., students in The Wooden Floor afterschool program learn ballet and modern dance from a group of instructors that includes internationally recognized choreographers, artists and dancers; receive one-on-one tutoring and homework help; and take part in life-skills and character-building workshops. In both cities, parents of children in these programs benefit from greater peace of mind while at work knowing that their child is in a supportive and enriching environment when the school day ends.

More than a decade of research shows that afterschool programs across the country are an integral support for children, families and communities. Each day after school, quality afterschool programs are keeping kids safe; inspiring them to learn; serving as a source of support and comfort to working families; and even helping working parents be more productive at work and keep their jobs.<sup>2</sup>

Given the difference that afterschool programs can make for children and families, important questions about scope and demand arise: How many children are in afterschool programs? How many families want to enroll their children in an afterschool program? And how many children are unsupervised after school who are missing out on the learning opportunities afterschool programs have to offer?

*America After 3PM* began in 2004, precisely because of the absence of reliable data about such topics. That year, the Afterschool Alliance set out to fill the information gap, conducting what was at that point the most in-depth study on how children spend their time after school.

The 2014 *America After 3PM* edition spans a decade of data chronicling how children spend the hours between 3 and 6 p.m.—the hours after school ends and before parents typically return home from work. Together with its predecessor reports, it will serve as a resource for policy makers, educators, parents and advocates on the trends of afterschool program participation, demand for afterschool programs, and the number of children who are alone and unsupervised during the after school hours.

Since 2004, *America After 3PM* has provided not only an exhaustive account of how children and youth spend their afterschool hours at both a national and state level, but also detailed the level of parent satisfaction with afterschool programs; barriers to participation; and disparities in both by income, race, ethnicity and community type. The 2014 *America After 3PM* builds on previous iterations of the study, describing activities and supports provided by afterschool programs—including additional data on children’s physical activity; snacks and meals; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); and the outcomes and benefits associated with participation in afterschool programs.

The report looks at children participating in afterschool programs and children missing out on afterschool opportunities. It examines who is in afterschool programs, the types of activities offered in programs, satisfaction with program quality, and what parents say about the benefits that afterschool programs provide their children and their families. It also provides an overview of those who are unsupervised after school; an overview of children who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available to them; and analyzes differences in the demand for afterschool programs by income, race and ethnicity to examine the opportunity gaps that persist.

Additional resources related to the 2014 *America After 3PM* report, accessible at <http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM>, include state-specific fact sheets as well as fact sheets on the Hispanic and African-American communities. Throughout 2015, special reports on physical activity and healthful eating, STEM, communities of concentrated poverty and summer learning opportunities will be released.



## Key Findings

Participation in afterschool programs has consistently increased over the past 10 years, rising by nearly 2 million children in the last five years alone. In 2014, nearly one-quarter of families and 18 percent of children rely on afterschool programs to provide a safe and supportive environment, inspire learning, and fill the gap between when the school day ends and when the workday ends.

Both the percentage and the total number of children in the United States participating in an afterschool program are on the rise. In 2014, 10.2 million children (18 percent) participate in an afterschool program, an increase from 2009 (8.4 million; 15 percent) and 2004 (6.5 million; 11 percent).<sup>3</sup> Nearly 1 in 4 families (23 percent) currently has a child enrolled in an afterschool program.

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However, the number of children unsupervised in the hours after school, while on the decline, remains high. One in 5 children—11.3 million children—spend time alone and unsupervised during the after school hours.

In communities across the United States, 11.3 million children are without supervision between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. That number is down from 15.1 million in 2009 and 14.3 million in 2004, but 1 in 5 children still do not have someone to care for them after school.

*Three percent of children in elementary school, or more than 800,000 students, and 19 percent of children in middle school, or 2.2 million students, are looking after themselves after school.*

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While participation in afterschool programs has increased, the unmet demand for afterschool continues to rise. More than 2 in 5 children—19.4 million—would participate if programs were available.

The unmet demand for afterschool programs has steadily risen over the last 10 years. In 2014, approximately 19.4 million children (41 percent) not currently in an afterschool program would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them, according to their parents. By comparison, in 2009, parents of 18.5 million children (38 percent) said they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available, up from parents of 15.3 million children (30 percent) in 2004.

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Together, the rates of participation and unmet demand show that more than half of all school-age children in 2014 have some measure of demand (either met or unmet) for afterschool programs.

Overall, more than half of all school-age children in 2014 show some measure of demand (either met or unmet) for afterschool. In fact, for every child in an afterschool program, approximately two more children would be enrolled if a program were available to them.

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As the economy continues to recover, afterschool programs are an essential source of support for working parents—giving them peace of mind at work and helping them to keep their jobs.

The survey finds overwhelming agreement, especially among parents with children in an afterschool program, that afterschool programs help working parents. More than 8 in 10 parents (83 percent) of children in afterschool programs agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs. Overall, 3 in 4 parents agree that afterschool programs help give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work, and among parents with children in afterschool, agreement jumps to 85 percent.

*Agreement that afterschool programs help provide working parents peace of mind about their children while at work is also extremely high among working mothers (80 percent), African-American parents (80 percent) and Hispanic parents (76 percent).*



There are distinct differences in afterschool participation and demand across income levels and ethnicity.

Participation in and demand for afterschool programs are much higher among children from low-income households compared to higher-income households, as well as higher among African-American and Hispanic children than Caucasian children.

While children from low-income households are more likely than their higher-income peers to participate in an afterschool program (20 percent versus 18 percent), the demand for afterschool programs is much higher among low-income families than families that do not qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.

*Half of children from low-income households not participating in an afterschool program would be enrolled if one were available to them, 16 percentage points higher than for children from higher-income households (34 percent).*

Similarly, Hispanic and African-American children are at least two times more likely to participate in an afterschool program than Caucasian children. Twenty-nine percent of Hispanic children are in programs, as are 24 percent of African-American children and 12 percent of Caucasian children. At the same time, unmet demand for afterschool programs is also higher among African-American and Hispanic children compared to Caucasian children, according to their parents.

*Thirty-five percent of Caucasian children currently not in an afterschool program would be enrolled if a program were available, whereas 60 percent of African-American and 57 percent of Hispanic children would be enrolled, a 25-point and 22-point difference, respectively.*

Cost and lack of a safe way for their children to get to and come home from afterschool programs are barriers that low-income households, African-American families and Hispanic families report keep them from enrolling their children in an afterschool program.

Among parents who would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available to them, obstacles to enrollment differed by income and by race and ethnicity. Parents in low-income households were more likely to cite cost and lack of a safe way for their children to get to and come home from afterschool programs as important factors for not enrolling their child in a program. African-American and Hispanic parents were much more likely than Caucasian parents to cite lack of a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs and lack of available afterschool programs as barriers to participation.

*Fifty-six percent of low-income households report that the cost of afterschool programs was a factor in their decision not to enroll their child, compared to 48 percent of higher-income households. In 2014, parents who pay for afterschool report spending an average of \$113.50 per week on afterschool programs.*

*The lack of a safe way for their child to get to and come home from an afterschool program was cited as barrier to enrolling their child in a program by 55 percent of African-American parents, 53 percent of Hispanic parents and 54 percent of low-income households, compared to 48 percent of higher-income households and half of Caucasian parents.*

*Close to half of Hispanic parents (48 percent) and 46 percent of African-American parents report that a very important factor in their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program is that afterschool programs are not available in their community, compared to 38 percent of Caucasian parents.*

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At the national level, girls and boys spend their time after school in similar ways. The demand for afterschool programs is also roughly the same among parents of boys and parents of girls.

For the first time, *America After 3PM* is able to report on the ways that girls and boys spend the hours between 3 and 6 p.m., and assess similarities and differences. Nationally, the ways in which girls and boys spend their time after the school day ends are similar.

*Girls are slightly more likely to participate in afterschool programs, with 1 in 5 girls (20 percent) and 17 percent of boys participating.*

*Fifteen percent of girls and 17 percent of boys are without supervision when the school day ends.*

*Among children not enrolled in an afterschool program, 2 in 5 boys (41 percent) and girls (41 percent) would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available to them.*

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Parents' overall satisfaction with their child's afterschool program remains high; in fact, parents today are much more satisfied than in the past with specific aspects of afterschool programs and hold stronger positive feelings regarding the benefits of afterschool programs.

The percentage of parents who are satisfied with their child's afterschool program remains relatively unchanged from *America After 3PM* findings in previous years. Nine in 10 parents (89 percent) are satisfied with their afterschool program, similar to parents' responses in 2009 (89 percent) and in 2004 (91 percent).

While overall program satisfaction is stable, satisfaction with specific afterschool program qualities has significantly increased:

*Satisfaction with the quality of care increased nine points, from 79 percent in 2009 to 88 percent in 2014.*

*Satisfaction with homework assistance increased 16 points, from 64 percent in 2009 to 80 percent in 2014.*

*Satisfaction with workforce skill development—such as teamwork leadership and critical thinking—increased 14 points, from 57 percent in 2009 to 71 percent in 2014.*

Parents with children in afterschool programs in 2014 were more likely to agree that afterschool programs help keep children safe and provide high-quality care, compared to 2009.

*More than 4 in 5 parents (81 percent) of children in afterschool programs agree that “afterschool programs in my area provide a high quality of care,” a 15-point increase from the 66 percent of parents who agreed with that statement in 2009.*

*Eighty-four percent of parents of children in afterschool programs agree that “afterschool programs in my area keep kids safe and out of trouble,” a seven-point increase from 2009, when 77 percent of parents agreed that “afterschool programs in my area keep kids safe.”*

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Parents view afterschool programs as more than just a safe environment for children. They recognize that programs provide a wide range of activities and enriching learning opportunities for children.

Parents of children in an afterschool program report that their programs offer a wide range of activities and enrichment for kids, from opportunities to be physically active to literacy support to science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) learning opportunities. For instance, when asked about features of their child's afterschool program:

*Four in 5 parents say that their afterschool program offers opportunities for physical activity, 72 percent of parents say their child has opportunities for reading or writing and nearly 7 in 10 parents (69 percent) say that their afterschool program offers a STEM learning opportunity.*

As a whole, parents, especially parents of afterschool participants, also agree that children can benefit from afterschool programs in a variety of ways, ranging from helping them develop social skills to reducing the likelihood of participating in risky behaviors.

*Approximately 4 in 5 parents overall (79 percent) and nearly 9 in 10 parents of afterschool program participants (88 percent) agree that afterschool programs can help children develop social skills through interaction with their peers.*

*Almost 3 in 4 parents (73 percent) and 4 in 5 parents of participants (83 percent) agree that afterschool programs can help reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors, such as commit a crime or use drugs, or become a teen parent.*

*Close to 2 in 3 parents (64 percent) and 4 in 5 parents of participants (82 percent) agree that afterschool programs can excite children about learning.*

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Many afterschool programs extend beyond the traditional school year and provide valuable summer learning programs as well. Participation in summer learning programs is on the rise, and parents strongly support public funding for these programs.

Eighty-five percent of parents indicate support for public funding for summer learning programs, a statistically significant increase of two percentage points over the already very strong support registered in 2009.

One-third of families report at least one child participated in a summer learning program last summer, up from the 25 percent of families in the 2009 survey reporting the same.

Demand for summer learning programs is high. More than half of families (51 percent) report a desire for their child to participate in a summer learning program in 2014.

However, the vast majority of parents paid for summer learning programs. The average weekly per-child cost for a summer learning program was \$250—high enough to put the programs out of the reach of many children and families.

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Parents strongly support public funding for afterschool programs regardless of political affiliation, where they live or race or ethnicity.

Support for public funding for afterschool programs is bipartisan, strong across all geographic regions, and high regardless of racial or ethnic background. Overall, more than 4 in 5 parents (84 percent) report that they favor public funding for afterschool opportunities in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth, a slight increase from 83 percent in 2009.

*Support for public funding for afterschool programs also crosses party lines—91 percent of parents who identify as Democrats, 86 percent of parents who self-identify as Independents and 80 percent of parents identifying as Republicans report that they favor public funding for afterschool programs.*

*Parents across all geographic regions support public funding for afterschool programs. Eighty-six percent of parents living in the Southeastern region of the United States, 85 percent of parents in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region, 85 percent of parents in the West and 83 percent of parents in the Midwest favor public funding for afterschool programs.*

Support for public funding of afterschool programs is even higher among African-American parents, Hispanic parents and working mothers.

*More than 9 in 10 African-American parents (91 percent), 87 percent of Hispanic parents and 87 percent of working mothers support public funding for afterschool programs.*





# Real Progress, But More Work to Do: Afterschool Participation Reaches 10.2 Million

Since 2004 when the first *America After 3PM* survey was conducted, participation in afterschool programs has been steadily on the rise, from 6.5 million participating children in 2004 to 8.4 million in 2009 to 10.2 million children today. The District of Columbia, Hawaii and California lead the nation in afterschool program participation, at 35 percent, 26 percent and 25 percent, respectively. All but 10 states saw an increase in their afterschool program participation from 2009.<sup>4</sup> Parents' overall satisfaction with afterschool has held steady, and satisfaction with the quality of care and other specific elements of afterschool has grown. Further, afterschool programs continue to serve high percentages of minority and low-income children and youth, thereby playing an important role in helping close the opportunity gap.

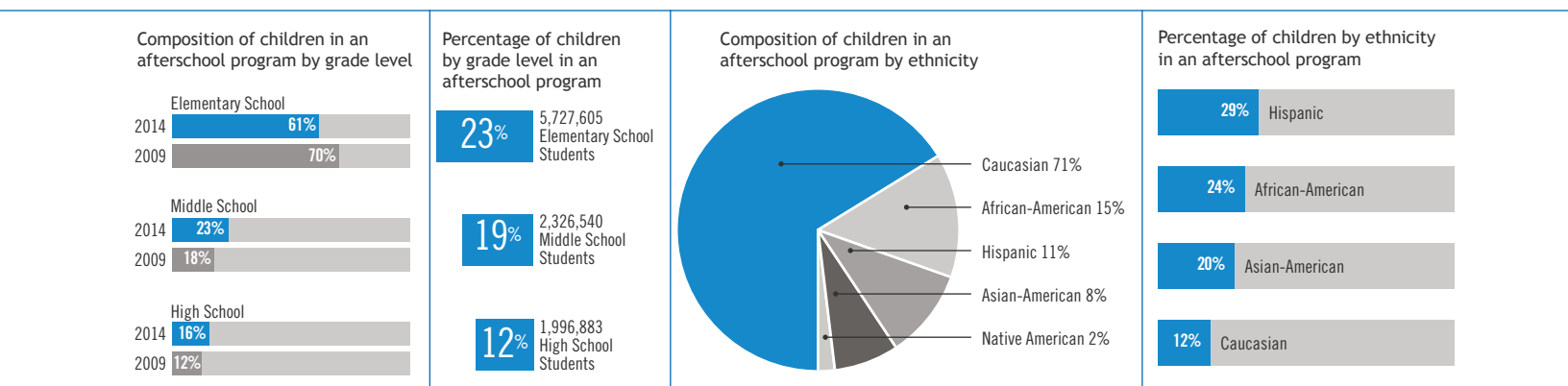
As in the past, this year's *America After 3PM* provides a detailed snapshot of the children participating in afterschool programs, what activities they are taking part in, how satisfied families are with their afterschool programs and what program qualities and factors are important to parents.

Percentage of children in an afterschool program by state



## Participation Spans Income Levels, Ethnicity and Gender

As in the previous two editions of *America After 3PM*, the data show that afterschool program participants are primarily children in elementary school, although participation by middle school and high school students saw significant increases between 2009 and 2014. More than 1 in 5 elementary school children (23 percent), 19 percent of middle school children and 12 percent of high school youth are in an afterschool program. This translates to approximately 5.7 million elementary school, 2.3 million middle school and roughly 2 million high school students in a supervised



and enriching environment during the hours after school. Afterschool program participants are relatively evenly split between girls and boys: Forty-nine percent of afterschool participants are girls and 51 percent are boys. Overall, 20 percent of girls and 17 percent of boys take part in an afterschool program.

Caucasian children continue to make up the majority of afterschool program participants. However, when looking at the differences by ethnicity, Hispanic<sup>5</sup> and African-American<sup>6</sup> children are more likely to participate in afterschool programs.

A significant percentage of children in afterschool programs are from low-income households<sup>7</sup>—45 percent, an increase of four percentage points from 2009. When looking specifically at households that qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program, participation in an afterschool program increased from 18 percent in 2009 to 20 percent in 2014.



## Too Many Children and Families are Missing Out

Although participation in afterschool programs increased considerably over the past 10 years, there remains a significant number of children who are alone and unsupervised in the hours after school. Moreover, the unmet demand for afterschool is on the rise, where 19.4 million children not currently in an afterschool program would be enrolled if one were available. A review of the data from *America After 3PM* finds that the profile of children who are unsupervised and the children whose parents would enroll them in an afterschool program if one were available remains relatively unchanged over the years, illustrating that, while afterschool programs are helping to narrow the opportunity gap, much work remains to be done to ensure all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs.

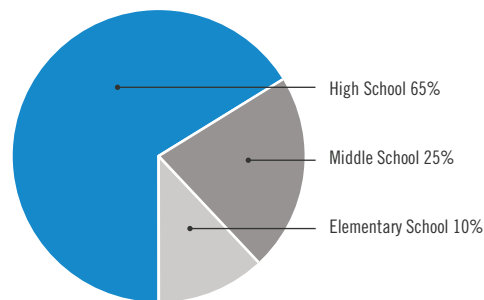
## 1 in 5 Children Unsupervised, but a Declining Trend Line

Nationally, 11.3 million children are alone and unsupervised after the last school bell rings. Kids in high school are a majority of the unsupervised students, and 1 in 10 children who are in “self-care” are in elementary school and 1 in 4 are in middle school. However, applying those percentages to the entire school-age population of children in elementary and middle school who are unsupervised in the afternoons demonstrates their significance. The 3 percent of children in elementary school and 19 percent of children in middle school looking after themselves translates to more than

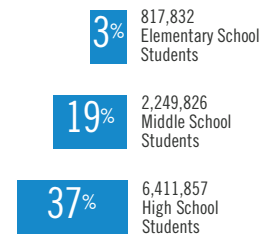
*11.3 million children are alone and unsupervised after school.*

*Children are spending an average of 7.3 hours per week unsupervised after school.*

Children in self-care by grade level



Students in K-12 in self-care



Percentage of children unsupervised after school by state



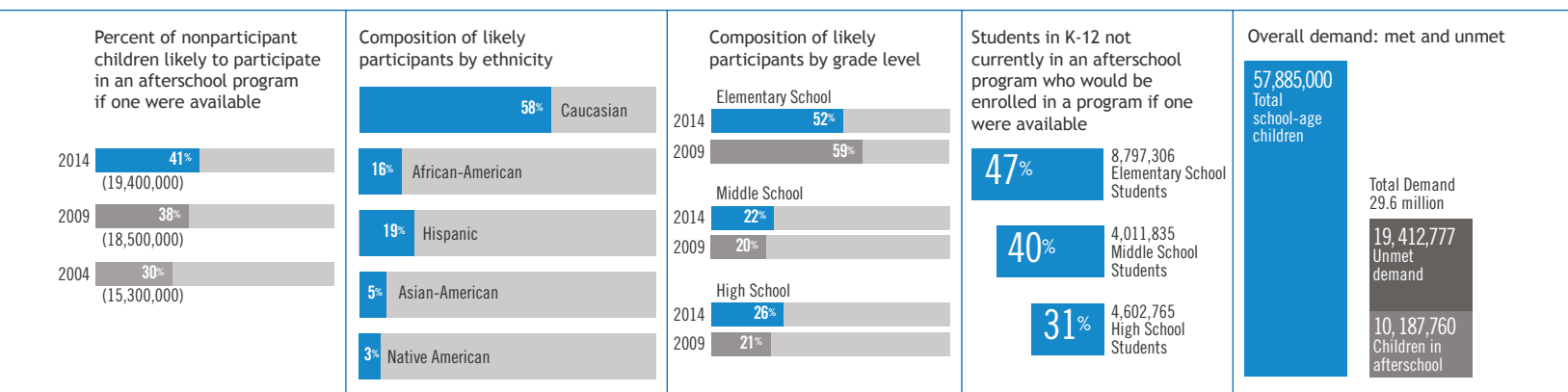
800,000 elementary school and 2.2 million middle school students on their own when the last school bell rings. When looking at gender, boys make up a larger portion of children in self-care than girls—56 percent of unsupervised children are boys and 44 percent are girls. Focusing on the population of boys as a whole and the population of girls as a whole, the percentages are similar, with 17 percent of boys and 15 percent of girls without supervision when the school day ends.

South Dakota has the highest percentage of children in self-care at 27 percent, seven percentage points higher than the national average, with Washington, D.C. and Missouri rounding out the three states with the highest percentages, at 26 percent and 25 percent, respectively.



## Nearly Twice as Many Children in Line to Participate, if Programs Were Available

Nationally, the demand<sup>8</sup> for afterschool programs has steadily climbed since *America After 3PM* was first conducted in 2004. Today, unmet demand is nearly twice as high as current participation; approximately 19.4 million children (41 percent) not participating in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if a program were available. Unmet demand for afterschool is highest in Washington, D.C., at 66 percent, followed by Ohio at 53 percent and South Carolina at 51 percent.



Percentage of children not currently in an afterschool program who would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them, by state



As in 2009, Caucasian children and elementary school students make up the majority of children who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one was available to them. However, the percentage of children in high school and middle school with unmet demand increased slightly from 2009 to 2014. Today just more than half of likely participants are boys (55 percent) and 45 percent are girls. Of the approximately 19.4 million children who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available, 8.8 million are elementary school students, 4 million are middle school students and 4.6 million are high school students.

Combining the number of children in an afterschool program and the number of children not currently enrolled in a program but who would be enrolled if one were available to them equates to more than half of all school-age children demanding afterschool programs in some form—either met or unmet demand.

## Working Parents Rely on Afterschool Programs

The impact of the availability and accessibility of afterschool programs extends beyond the children who are able to take advantage of the learning opportunities and additional supports programs are able to offer. Parents and families also see benefits from afterschool programs, specifically in providing support to working parents. Eighty-five percent of parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that afterschool programs help to give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work, and just 3 percent disagree with this statement. Agreement on this statement is also extremely high among all working mothers (80 percent), African-American parents (80 percent) and Hispanic parents (76 percent), regardless of whether they have a child in an afterschool program.

When parents with a child in an afterschool program were asked if they agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs, 83 percent of parents agree, with 55 percent completely agreeing. Only 3 percent of parents disagree.

*85% of parents of afterschool program participants agree that afterschool programs help to give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work. Just 3% of parents disagree with this statement.*





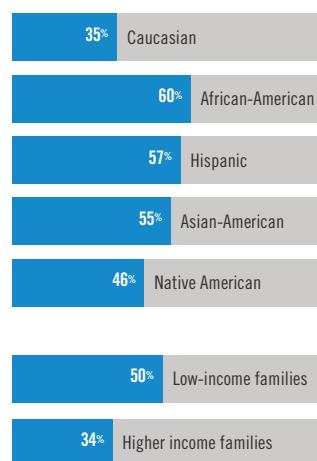


# Opportunity Gaps Persist

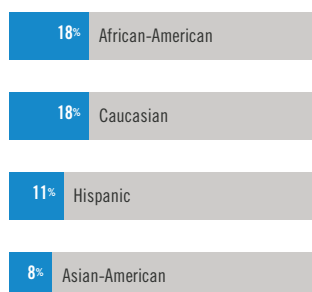
The hours after school ends and before parents get home from work are a time when children have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning, interact with their peers, work under the care and supervision of supportive mentors, build on lessons learned during the school day and more. However, *America After 3PM* finds a gap between low- and higher-income households, as well as between minority households and Caucasian households, with regard to the opportunity to participate in an afterschool program that provides a supervised, enriching environment. Demand for afterschool programs is higher among low-income households compared to higher-income households, and higher among minority households compared to Caucasian households. However, parents in low-income and minority households are also more likely to report a lack of available afterschool programs in their community, and are also more likely to cite barriers related to location and safe travel to and from an afterschool program.

In looking only at the population of children with unmet demand for afterschool programs, Caucasian children make up the majority. However, as in previous surveys, when looking at the demand for afterschool programs among specific ethnic and racial populations, the demand for afterschool is significantly higher among minority families compared to Caucasian families. Demand for afterschool programs is highest among African-American parents. Between minority and Caucasian parents, the differences in the likelihood of enrolling a child in an afterschool program if one were available range from 11 percentage points up to 25 percentage points. Additionally, while Caucasian children make up the majority

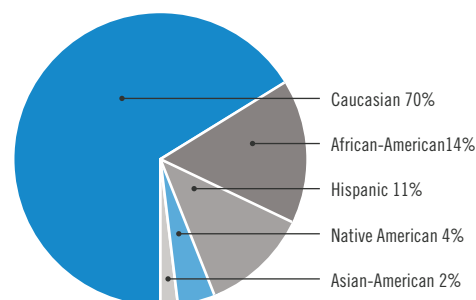
Percent of nonparticipant children likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available



Percentage of children by ethnicity in self-care



Children in self-care by ethnicity



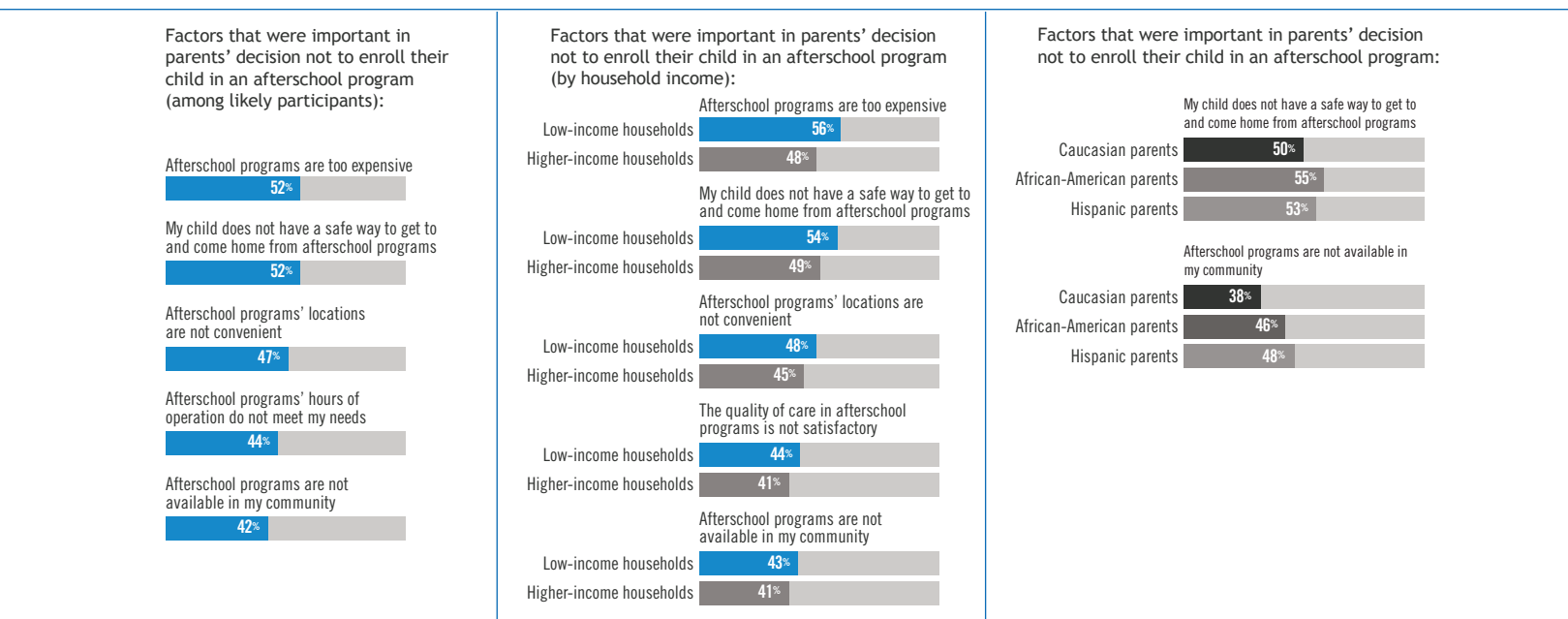
of the self-care population, a large percentage of African-American children also spend their afterschool hours unsupervised.

Demand for afterschool programs among low-income households is also higher when compared to higher-income cohorts. Half of the children from low-income families surveyed would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available, compared to 34 percent of children not eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Additionally, children from low-income households make up 31 percent of the self-care population, a reflection of the reality that they are more likely than their higher-income counterparts to be alone and unsupervised in the hours after school—19 percent versus 12 percent.



## Barriers to Participation<sup>9</sup>

One goal of *America After 3PM* is to identify the factors that influence a parent's decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program. While not a barrier to enrollment, among parents whose child was not enrolled, but would be if one were available, the most common reason for not taking part in an afterschool program was that a parent or guardian was home during the hours after school. When looking specifically at barriers to participation, top barriers<sup>10</sup> cited by parents to enrolling their children in an afterschool program include cost, lack of a safe way to get to



and come home from afterschool programs, and convenience of location and hours. Significantly, more than 4 in 10 parents (42 percent) said that afterschool programs were not available in their community.

Looking at the differences between household income levels, parents in low-income households were more likely to cite cost and the lack of a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs than higher-income parents as a reason not to enroll their child in an afterschool program. More than 2 in 3 parents in low-income households (68 percent) agree that the current economic conditions have made it difficult for them to afford placing their children in an afterschool program, compared to 57 percent of households not qualifying for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.

African-American and Hispanic parents were much more likely than Caucasian parents to cite lack of a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs and lack of available afterschool programs as barriers to participation.

African-American and Hispanic parents were also much more likely to agree with the statement “finding an enriching environment for my child in the hours after school is a challenge,” compared to Caucasian parents. Sixty-nine percent of Hispanic parents and 67 percent of African-American parents agreed with the statement, compared to 58 percent of Caucasian parents. Even African-American and Hispanic parents with a child enrolled in an afterschool program reported that it was a challenge to find an enriching environment for their child during the hours after school. Among parents with a child enrolled in an afterschool program, 63 percent of African-American parents and 70 percent of Hispanic parents agreed that it was challenging to find an enriching environment for their child after school, compared to 60 percent of Caucasian parents.

*Among parents that pay for afterschool programs, the average weekly cost is \$113.50, an increase from \$74.41 in 2009 (in 2014 dollars). One in 5 parents surveyed report receiving government assistance to pay for afterschool for their child, at an average of \$113.20 per week.*





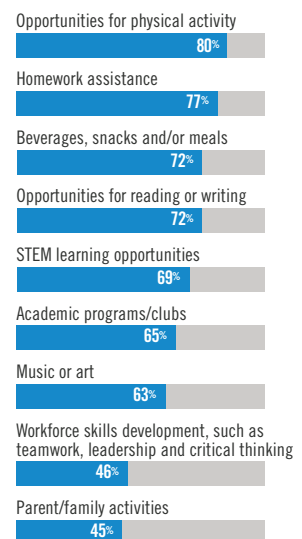


## Afterschool Students Benefit from a Wide Range of Supports and Providers

Survey responses from parents of children in afterschool programs help provide a more in-depth picture of the types of supports afterschool programs are providing to children, who is providing afterschool program opportunities and where, how often children are taking advantage of afterschool programs, and how affordable afterschool programs are.

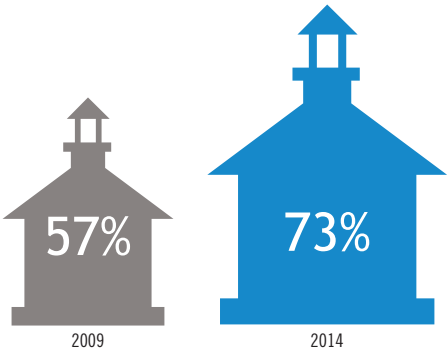
Children in afterschool programs benefit from a wide variety of essential supports and activities that encourage healthy behaviors, increase knowledge and skills, and provide learning opportunities. Eight in 10 parents of children in an afterschool program report that their program offers opportunities for physical activity, and more than 7 in 10 said their program offers homework assistance, snacks and/or meals and opportunities for reading or writing.

### Features offered by afterschool programs:

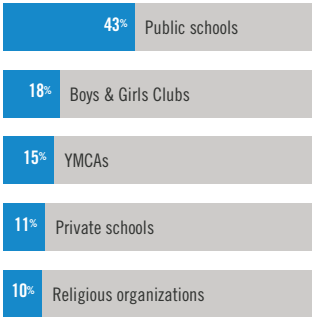


In 2014, children who participated in afterschool programs spent an average of 3.62 days per week at their program, averaging 7.4 hours per week in afterschool. Parents largely pay for afterschool programs; only 1 in 4 parents surveyed reported their program was offered for free. Among those who pay for afterschool (75 percent), parents report spending an average of \$113.50 per week on afterschool programs. One in 5 parents surveyed report receiving government assistance to pay for afterschool for their child, at an average of \$113.20 per week. Three out of 4 parents report that they are satisfied with the cost of their afterschool program.

Percentage of afterschool programs located in a public school building, as reported by parents



Afterschool program providers:



**\$113.50**

*The average amount parents report spending per week on their child's afterschool program*

**\$110.30**

*Parents with children in grades K-5*

**\$119.50**

*Parents with children in grades 6-8*

**\$121.20**

*Parents with children in grades 9-12*

Nearly 3 in 4 parents (73 percent) report that their child's afterschool program is located in a public school building—a 16-point increase from 2009.<sup>11</sup> While most programs are located in public schools, often community partners provide programming. Parents report that public schools are the largest provider of afterschool programs, followed by Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, private schools and religious organizations.

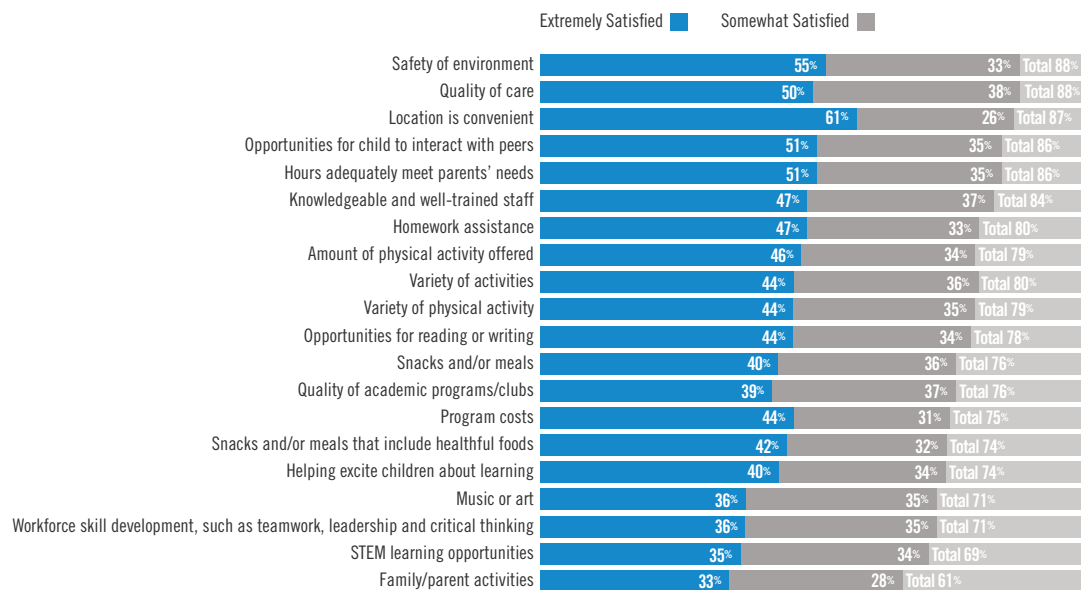


## Afterschool Programs Provide Quality Care in a Variety of Areas

Parents' assessments of their children's afterschool programs—both their overall assessment and their evaluation of specific program offerings—provide a picture of the level of afterschool program quality, areas of strength for afterschool programs and areas in need of improvement. Nationally, satisfaction with afterschool programs continues to be very high among parents (89 percent). Examined state by state, overall satisfaction with programs shows some variation, but remains strong: satisfaction ranges from 97 percent in Washington, D.C. to 67 percent in Wyoming.

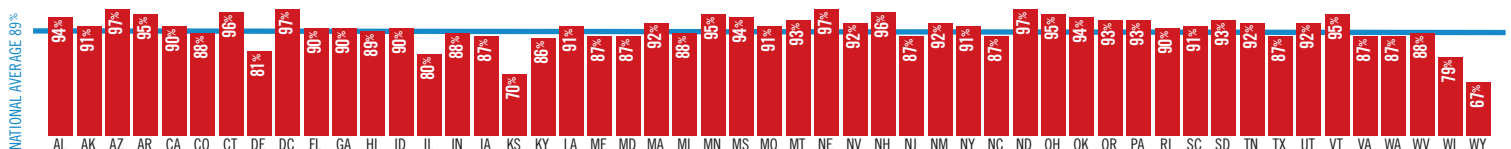
Parents of afterschool program participants also agree that afterschool programs as a whole are providing high-quality care. More than 8 in 10 parents (81 percent) agree with the statement, “Afterschool programs in my area provide a high quality of care.”

Parents' level of satisfaction with features of their child's afterschool program:



(Total may be different than the two numbers because of rounding)

Percentage of parents satisfied with their child's afterschool program, by state



When asked about specific aspects of their child's afterschool program, a strong majority of parents say they are satisfied with features associated with quality afterschool programs, such as quality of care, staff quality, activity variation and child engagement. For instance:

- Close to 9 in 10 parents (88 percent) are satisfied with their program's quality of care.
- Eighty-four percent of parents are satisfied that the program staff are knowledgeable and well-trained.
- Eighty percent are satisfied with the variety of activities offered by the program.
- Nearly 3 in 4 parents (74 percent) are satisfied that their afterschool program is helping to excite their child about learning.

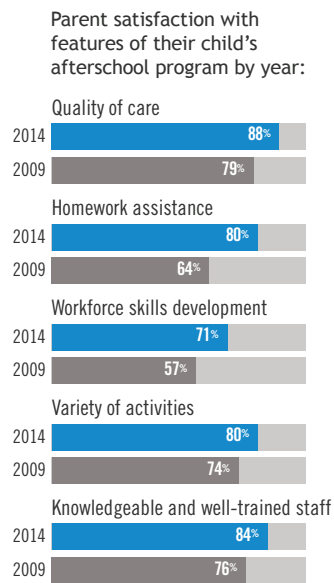
Additionally, although overall satisfaction with afterschool programs has remained relatively unchanged from past surveys, parents' level of satisfaction with specific features of their afterschool program—including the quality of care; homework assistance; and help developing teamwork, leadership and critical thinking skills—saw significant increases.

Overall, parents are highly satisfied with the characteristics of their afterschool program that played an important role in their selection of the program. For instance, a program's safe environment, quality of care, and knowledgeable and well-trained staff were among the top reasons for choosing an afterschool program, and also among the most highly-rated in parent satisfaction.

When examining the factors parents view as most valuable in their child's afterschool program, excluding programs' operational features, responses indicate parents want their child's out-of-school experience to be fun and varied, and they want it to complement, although look different from, the regular school day.

More than 8 in 10 parents (81 percent) report that their child's enjoyment is very important in selecting an afterschool program. More than 7 in 10 parents (71 percent) view the variety of activities offered by a program as very important in their choice, and 68 percent say that opportunities for their child to be physically active are very important. More than 3 in 5 parents (62 percent) cited providing learning activities that are not offered during the regular school day as a very important factor in selecting an afterschool program.

A strong majority of parents also view afterschool programs as engaging children in learning, supporting their overall growth and development, and providing enriching activities that are not offered during the school day. Eight in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs should provide a fun experience for children; 71 percent agree that afterschool programs should help children develop workforce skills such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking; and 71 percent of parents also agree that afterschool programs should provide learning activities that are not offered during the regular school day.



Parents agree that afterschool programs should (Top five answers):



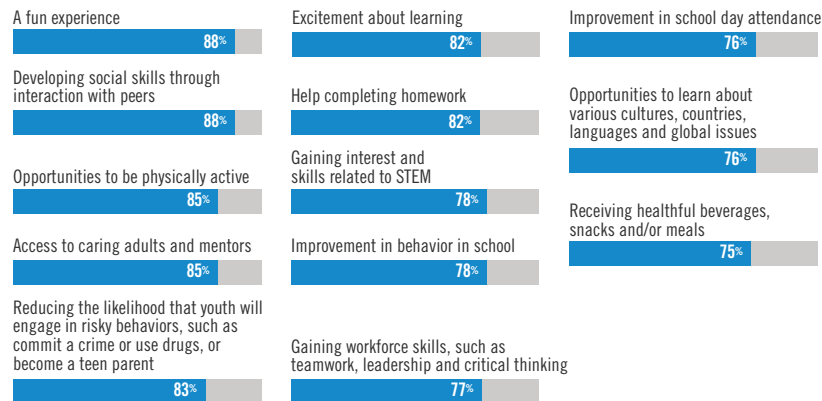
*81% of parents say that their child's enjoyment is very important in selecting an afterschool program and 87% say that afterschool programs should provide a fun experience for children.*

## The Positive Impacts of Afterschool Programs on Children

A substantial and growing body of research points to the positive academic, social and emotional outcomes associated with participation in quality afterschool programs.<sup>12</sup> The *America After 3PM* survey finds that parents—in particular those with children currently in an afterschool program—believe that afterschool programs provide a safe space for children and agree that, among other things, afterschool programs help to excite kids about learning; to become physically active; and to develop interest

*83% of parents of afterschool program participants agree that afterschool programs reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors, such as commit a crime or use drugs, or become a teen parent. Just 3% of parents disagree with this statement.*

Parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that afterschool programs provide the following benefits:



**85%**  
of parents  
favor public  
funding for  
summer  
learning  
opportunities

**84%**  
of parents  
favor public  
funding for  
afterschool  
opportunities

and skills in science, technology, engineering and math learning. Parents of kids in afterschool programs also strongly believe that afterschool programs positively influence children's behavior—improving behavior in school and reducing the likelihood that they will commit a crime, use drugs or become a teen parent.

Many afterschool programs extend beyond the traditional school year, providing summer learning programs that help combat summer learning loss among students. One-third of families report at least one child participated in a summer learning program in 2013—up from the 25 percent of families reporting in 2009 that at least one child participated—paying an average of \$250 per child per week. Yet, demand for programs is great. More than half of families (51 percent) reported a desire for their child to participate in a summer learning program in 2014. Parents' support of and need for summer learning programs is also expressed through their strong backing of public funding for summer learning programs. Eighty-five percent of parents indicate support for public funding, an increase of two percentage points over the already very strong support registered in 2009. The high level of support for public funding of summer learning programs mirrors parents' strong support for public funding of afterschool programs.

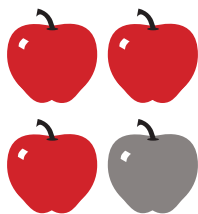


## Physical Activity, Health and Nutrition

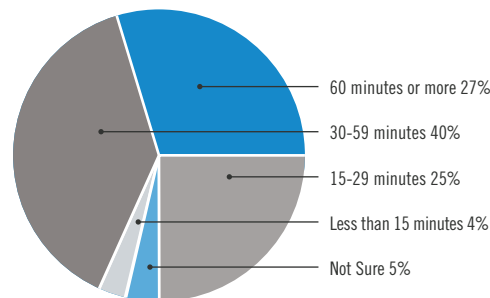
Childhood obesity is a growing national concern; rates have doubled among children and quadrupled among adolescents over the past 30 years.<sup>13</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that in 2012, more than 1 in 3 children and adolescents in the United States were overweight or obese.<sup>14</sup> Parents with children in an afterschool program view the programs as a way to help keep kids active and healthy—providing children with opportunities to be active, eat nutritious foods and drink healthful beverages. Eighty-four percent of parents of afterschool program participants agree

*85% of parents with children in afterschool programs agree that afterschool programs provide children with opportunities to be physically active.*

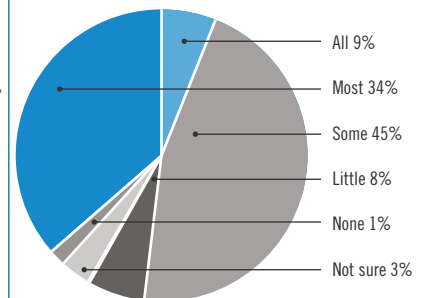
3 out of 4 parents of afterschool program participants agree that children receive healthful beverages, snacks and/or meals in afterschool programs.



Parents' responses to "On a typical day in their afterschool program, how many minutes of physical activity does your child get?"



Parents' responses to "How much of this physical activity would you say is moderate to vigorous physical activity?"



that afterschool programs should help children be physically active, and 85 percent agree that afterschool programs do provide children with opportunities to be physically active. Approximately 8 in 10 parents (79 percent) are satisfied with the amount of physical activity provided by their child's afterschool program and 79 percent are satisfied with the variety of physical activity.

Additionally, more than 3 in 4 parents of participants (77 percent) agree that afterschool programs should provide healthful beverages, snacks and/or meals. Parents of children in afterschool are largely satisfied with their afterschool program's snack and/or meal offerings—74 percent report that they are satisfied with the afterschool program's snacks and/or meals that included healthful foods.

The opportunity for physical activity and availability of healthful snacks and/or meals were also important factors in parents' selection of their afterschool program. When asked to select factors that were very important in choosing their child's afterschool program, nearly 7 in 10 parents with children in afterschool (68 percent) shared that opportunities for physical activity were very important in their decision. More than 3 in 5 parents (62 percent) said that in choosing a program, it was very important to them that the program provides snacks/meals that include foods that are healthful.<sup>15</sup>

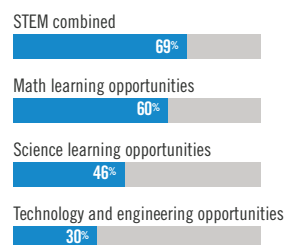
When looking only at responses of parents with a child in an afterschool program offering physical activity, 2 out of 3 parents (67 percent) report that during a typical day, their child engages in at least 30 minutes of physical activity. Nearly 9 in 10 parents (88 percent) report that at least some of the physical activity their child participates in is moderate to vigorous. Fewer than 1 in 10 parents (9 percent) say that their child gets little to no moderate or vigorous physical activity in their afterschool program.

When asked about the types of foods and beverages served in their child’s afterschool program, 72 percent of parents whose child’s afterschool program provides beverages, snacks and/or meals said that their program only served healthful food or beverages.<sup>16,17</sup>

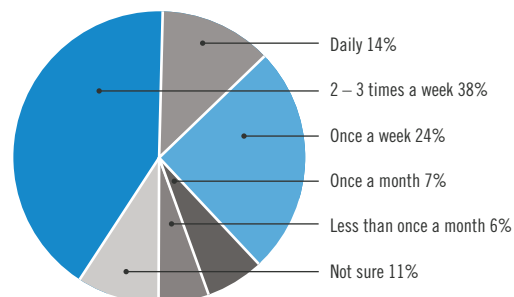
### *Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Learning Opportunities*

Interest in building the capacity of young people in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in the United States has grown over the last decade, in part because of the recognition that citizens now require a greater level of STEM literacy to make informed decisions about complex issues in an ever-changing world. Additionally, more and more jobs now require proficiency in STEM, raising concerns about ensuring access to adequate educational experiences in order to ensure all students can participate effectively in the modern workplace. While many look to the school day to help better equip students with STEM skills, increasingly afterschool programs have become an important and growing part of the STEM education ecosystem, providing additional opportunities for students to engage in hands-on, interest-driven and project-based STEM learning.

Features offered by afterschool programs:



Parents’ responses to “About how often does your child participate in a science, technology and engineering, or math activity as part of their afterschool program?”





## Afterschool STEM Learning Opportunities

*In Cambridge, Mass., Science Club for Girls seeks to increase science literacy and self-confidence in girls, especially those from populations underrepresented in STEM fields, by providing opportunities to learn about STEM topics ranging from astronomy to oceanography, inviting women working in a science field to speak with students, and taking field trips to STEM companies and universities. Students in Project GUTS in Santa Fe, N.M., design, create and test computer models on science topics relevant to their communities. For example, students developed models to test if a disease would spread throughout their school population by looking at factors such as the school building's design, the number of students and the disease's contagiousness. Across the country, afterschool programs are engaging children in innovative, hands-on, project-based STEM learning opportunities, helping them develop an interest in STEM subjects, a mastery and better understanding of STEM activities and skills and an appreciation of the role and value of STEM and STEM learning activities. Afterschool STEM holds great potential, but to ensure that all children are able to access quality STEM learning opportunities, greater investment in STEM afterschool programs is necessary.*

*65% of parents agree that afterschool programs can help children gain interest and skills related to STEM.*

For the first time, *America After 3PM* asked parents about their afterschool program's STEM learning opportunities, expectations and satisfaction in order to see how prevalent STEM learning opportunities are after school.

*America After 3PM* finds that overall, parents believe that afterschool programs do and should provide hands-on STEM learning experiences for their children. Seven in 10 parents surveyed agree that afterschool programs should offer opportunities to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning, and 65 percent of parents agree that afterschool programs can help children gain interest and skills related to STEM.

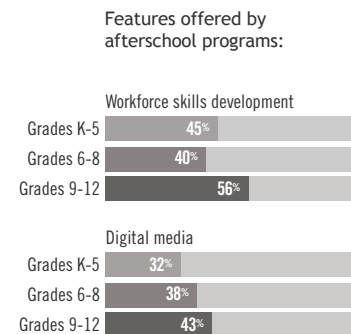
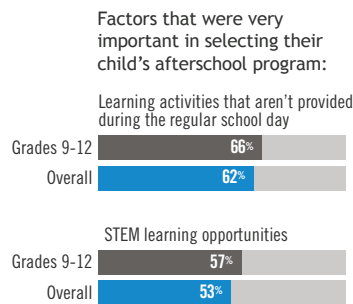
Nearly 7 in 10 parents of afterschool program participants (69 percent) report that their program offers a STEM learning opportunity, with more than half (52 percent) of these parents reporting that their child takes part in a STEM activity at least twice a week.

While parents report that many factors were important to them in selecting their child's afterschool program, more than half (53 percent) said that STEM learning opportunities were very important in their decision.<sup>18</sup> Of parents who shared that STEM learning opportunities were very important in selecting their child's afterschool program, 85 percent were satisfied with their afterschool program's STEM learning opportunity.

## Older Youth

Previous research has shown that quality afterschool programs can help older youth develop stronger connections to their peers and to caring adults, improve their attitudes toward school and learn about college and career options.<sup>19</sup> In this survey, answers from parents of high school students illustrate how the concerns and priorities of parents of older youth differ from those of parents of younger children when looking for an afterschool program, as well as differences in types of activities offered by programs for older youth. Overall satisfaction with their child's afterschool program is just as high among parents of high school youth as it is among all parents surveyed (both 89 percent).

*69% of parents of high schoolers said “the hours meet my needs” was very important in their selection of an afterschool program versus 79% of parents of elementary school students.*



However, compared to all surveyed parents with a child in an afterschool program, parents of high school students are more likely to report that learning activities that are not provided during the regular school day and STEM learning opportunities were very important in their selection of an afterschool program. Sixty percent of parents of high school students in an afterschool program report that college exploration or readiness opportunities were important to them, and 58 percent said that opportunities for career exploration or readiness were important. Parents of high school students in an afterschool program were less likely to report that factors related to convenience, such as program hours or location, were important in their selection of an afterschool program than parents of elementary- and middle-school students.



Parents of high school students are also much more likely than parents of elementary- and middle-school students to report that their teen's afterschool program offered digital media opportunities and workforce skills development covering such topics as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking. More than half (52 percent) also shared that their child's afterschool program offered college exploration or readiness opportunities and 48 percent said that their program offered career exploration or readiness opportunities. A strong majority of parents are satisfied with the opportunities for college and career readiness; more than 7 in 10 parents of high school youth reported that they are satisfied with either their afterschool program's career or college exploration or readiness opportunities (72 percent, 71 percent).

*A strong majority of parents are satisfied with the opportunities for college and career readiness in their high schoolers' afterschool program.*



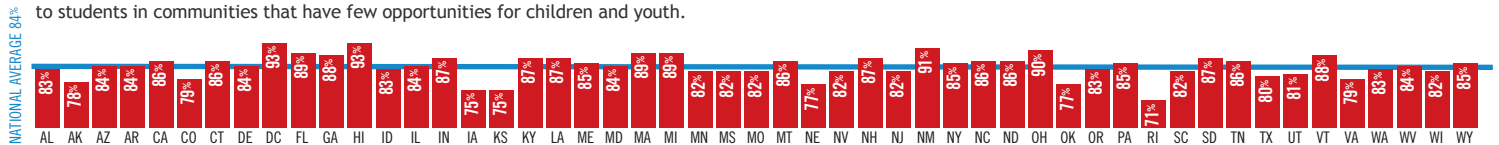


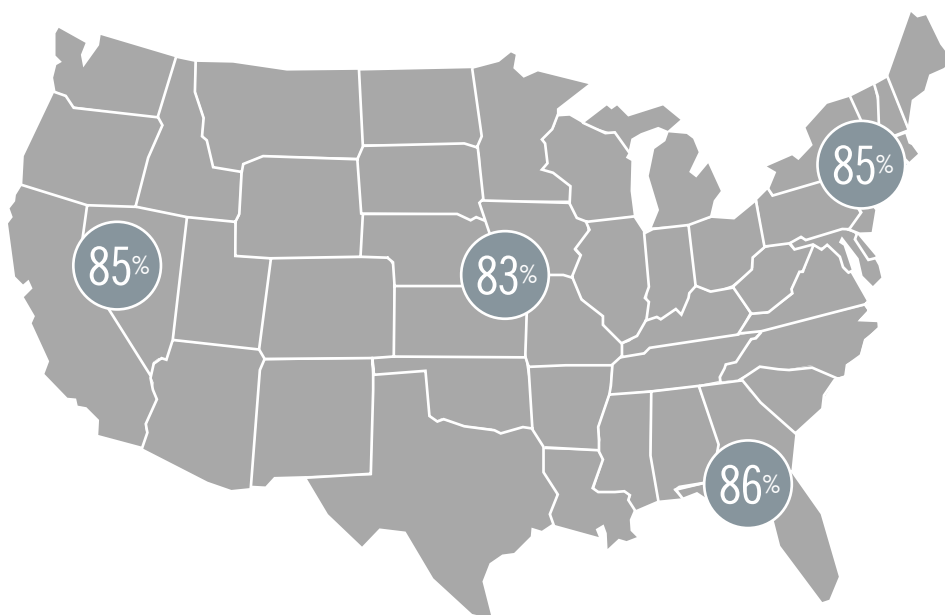


# Parents Want Public Funding to Support Afterschool Programs

A combination of private investment and public investment at the federal, state and local levels in afterschool programs is needed to increase availability and ensure the affordability of programs in communities around the country. Parents recognize the value of afterschool programs and view federal investment in programs as important, strongly supporting public funding for afterschool. Overall, 84 percent of parents report that they favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth, a slight increase from 83 percent in 2009.

Percentage of parents who favor public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth.





Strong support for public funding for afterschool programs spans party lines, geographic regions, and racial or ethnic background. When looking at political identification, more than 9 in 10 parents (91 percent) who identify as Democrats, 86 percent of parents who identify as Independents and 80 percent of parents identifying as Republicans report that they favor public funding for afterschool programs. Examining support by region, 86 percent of parents living in the Southeastern region of the United States, 85 percent of parents in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region, 85 percent of parents in the West and 83 percent of parents in the Midwest favor public funding for afterschool programs.

While parents overall strongly favor public funding for afterschool programs, support for public funding of afterschool programs is even higher among African-American parents, Hispanic parents and working mothers. More than 9 in 10 African-American parents (91 percent), 87 percent of Hispanic parents and 87 percent of working mothers support public funding for afterschool programs.



# Conclusion

The past decade has seen much progress in the number of children who are able to take advantage of the opportunities and activities afterschool programs have to offer, transforming the hours between 3 and 6 p.m. from a time of concern for working parents to a time of learning and advancement for students. Overall participation in afterschool programs has increased by nearly 60 percent from 2004 to 2014, with nearly 4 million more children in afterschool programs today. In addition to more children participating in afterschool programs, parents' satisfaction with specific aspects of afterschool programs—such as the quality of care, staff and program activities—has significantly increased over the last five years.

Although sizeable gains have been made in afterschool program quality and participation, the unmet demand for afterschool programs continues to rise. In 2004, the parents of 15.3 million children said they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available; today that number stands at 19.4 million children. And, while the number of children alone and unsupervised after school has decreased over the last 10 years, there are still 11.3 million children headed for an unsupervised environment after the last school bell rings.



The data in this report show that parents are increasingly turning to afterschool programs to meet their own and their children's needs in the hours after school. The combined demand for afterschool, both met and unmet, exceeds 50 percent of school-age children in the United States. Parents who are fortunate enough to have access to afterschool programs are highly satisfied with those programs and are increasingly satisfied with aspects of the programs that are linked to quality.

*There are 11.3 million children headed for an unsupervised environment after the last school bell rings.*



Increased federal, state, local and private investments are essential to ensure that quality afterschool programs are available, accessible and affordable to all children, regardless of income level or geographic area. Public support for federal funding of afterschool programs is strong, with a high-level of support across political party identification and geographic region. Yet federal investment in the primary funding stream for afterschool programs has remained relatively flat over the past five years—growing less than 2 percent, from \$1.13 billion in 2009 to \$1.15 billion in 2014. Despite the growing call for afterschool programs, \$4 billion in local grant requests have been denied due to insufficient federal funds and an increasing number of requests over the course of 10 years.<sup>20</sup>

Taken together, the 2004, 2009 and 2014 editions of *America After 3PM* illustrate how much progress has been made in the afterschool hours, but at the same time, they make clear that as a nation, we have much more work ahead of us to ensure that all children are afforded the supports and opportunities afterschool programs have to offer. It will take a united effort to increase the availability of quality afterschool programs that help children reach their full potential and succeed in school, college, career and beyond. To help families and the approximately 19.4 million children across the United States who would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them, it will take a concerted effort by the public and private sectors—as well as educators, families and communities—to tackle the challenge of meeting the demand for afterschool programs.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Based on a Pew Research Center survey, Internet use has increased from 74 percent in December 2008 to 87 percent in January 2014. Pew Research Center. (2014). *Internet Use Over Time*. Pew Research Internet Project. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/internet-use/internet-use-over-time>.

<sup>2</sup>Afterschool Alliance. (2014). "Evaluations Backgrounder: A Summary of Formal Evaluations of Afterschool Programs' Impact on Academics, Behavior, Safety and Family Life." Retrieved from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/challenge2014/EvaluationBackgrounder-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Due to the change in survey collection, the projected numbers and percentages reported on this year for participation in afterschool programs, children in self-care, and children not in an afterschool program but whose parent would enroll them if one were available, is based on child level data rather than household level data that was reported on in previous years. The household level percentages are included in the topline questionnaire.

<sup>4</sup>See state-specific fact sheets for state-level data points. Available at <http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM>.

<sup>5</sup>This includes parents surveyed that selected "Hispanic or Latino" to describe themselves.

<sup>6</sup>This includes parents surveyed that selected "black or African-American" to describe themselves.

<sup>7</sup>Households who reported qualifying for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program are classified as low-income households, as qualification for this program is commonly used as a proxy for families living in or near poverty.

<sup>8</sup>The demand for afterschool is based on nonparticipant households who responded "extremely likely" or "somewhat likely" to the question, "If a program...were available in your community, please indicate how likely you would be to have each of your children participate in such an afterschool program."

<sup>9</sup>All figures in this section refer to the subset of parents whose child is not enrolled in an afterschool program, but would enroll them if one were available, except where explicitly stated otherwise.

<sup>10</sup>This includes answer choices that relate directly to challenges in enrolling a child in afterschool and excludes answer choices that pertain to reasons for not needing an afterschool program, such as “my child is old enough to care for her or himself.”

<sup>11</sup>In 2009, 57 percent of parents said that their child’s afterschool program was located in a public school. The wording and answer choices for this question were slightly modified:

2014: “During the 2013-2014 school year, are any of your children in grade \_\_\_’s afterschool programs physically located in a public school building?” Answer choices: Yes, No, I don’t know.

2009: “During the 2008-2009 school year, where were each of your children’s afterschool programs located?” Answer choices: Public school, YMCA, Private school, Religious center, Recreation/Community center, Boys & Girls Club, Library, Private home, YWCA, Other.

<sup>12</sup>Afterschool Alliance. (2014). “Taking a Deeper Dive into Afterschool: Positive Outcomes and Promising Practices.” Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper\\_Dive\\_into\\_Afterschool.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper_Dive_into_Afterschool.pdf).

<sup>13</sup>Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Kit, B.K., Flegal, K.M. (2014). “Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*. National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2011: With Special Features on Socioeconomic Status and Health. Hyattsville, MD; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2012.

<sup>14</sup>Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Kit, B.K., Flegal, K.M. (2014). “Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

<sup>15</sup>The answer choices “physical activity opportunities” and “program provides snacks/meals that include foods that are healthy” ranked 9th and 12th out of a list of 23 answer choices.

<sup>16</sup>Although these numbers are promising, it is important to note that the findings reflect parents’ perceptions of what is taking place in their child’s afterschool program, as well as their personal understanding and interpretation of the question and their definitions of words such as “moderate,” “vigorous” and “healthy.”

<sup>17</sup>In the survey, the Standards for Healthy Eating in Out-of-School Time Programs adopted by the National AfterSchool Association was used to define “healthy foods,” where “Healthy foods are described as those that are minimally processed foods made with whole grains and heart healthy fats or oils and without added sugar or trans fats; fruits and vegetables; beverages made without added sugar.”

<sup>18</sup>The answer choice, “science, technology, engineering or math learning opportunities” ranked 16th out of a list of 23 answer choices.

<sup>19</sup>Harris, E., Deschenes, S. and Wallace, A. (2011). Helping Older Youth Succeed Through Expanded Learning Opportunities. Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/ncsl-harvard-family-research-project-brief-series-elo-research-policy-practice/helping-older-youth-succeed-through-expanded-learning-opportunities>.

<sup>20</sup>O’Donnell, P., & Ford, J. (2013). *The Continuing Demand for 21st Century Community Learning Centers across America: More than four billion dollars of unmet need*; Peterson, T., Fowler, S. and Dunham, T.F. (2013). “Creating the Recent Force Field: A Growing Infrastructure for Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Opportunities.” *Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success*. Washington, D.C.: Collaborative Communications Group.



# About the Afterschool Alliance

Since 2000, the Afterschool Alliance has worked to ensure that all children have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs. As the nation's leading voice for afterschool, we are the go-to resource on afterschool issues for the general public, policymakers, media and practitioners. We work at the local, state and federal levels, engaging public will to increase public/private investments in—and access to—quality before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs for all children.

The Afterschool Alliance works with a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, advocacy groups, providers, business and philanthropic leaders and technical assistance organizations. We make the case for afterschool programs' positive impacts on children's learning, education and well-being; supports for families and communities; workforce development; the arts and creativity; college access; and more. Our direct outreach extends to all 47 statewide afterschool networks and 26,000 providers, community partners and supporters. For more information visit us at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

For more information about the national and state-specific *America After 3PM* survey findings, visit: <http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM>. Additional resources related to the 2014 *America After 3PM* report are accessible, including state-specific fact sheets. Throughout 2015, special reports on physical activity and healthful eating, STEM, communities of concentrated poverty and summer learning opportunities will be available.

Citation: Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand*. Washington, D.C.